

Children ask questions. Teenagers look for answers. And Bill Edgar, professor, apologist and musician, provides a wonderful resource to help teenagers to find those answers. Whether it is the great 'who am I?' questions or the more esoteric 'are there vampires?', Dr Edgar is a reliable and stimulating guide. I know at least one teenager who will be enjoying this. My daughter!

David Robertson, Solas CPC, St Peters Free Church, Dundee

Teens struggle with doubts, anxiety, and peer pressure regularly. *You Asked* provides a thought-provoking launching point from which teens can wrestle with these unique dilemmas. Each chapter provides insight and guidance into specific questions and concerns, which can be explored discretely or as part of the larger narrative. Combined with follow-up discussion, this book can go a long way to helping mitigate the philosophical and ethical minefield known as adolescence.

Michael Keller Reformed University Fellowship Campus Minister, New York City

Dr. Edgar offers a brilliant, thorough, and, yet, accessible apologetic for teens regarding the Christian faith. So many students know bits and pieces of Christianity; *You Asked* provides a cohesive systematic theology in a personal manner that a teen can understand. *You Asked* has great value for non-believing, new-believing, and long-believing teens. Every Christian teen should read *You Asked* before they attend college to equip them for the challenges to their worldview. Every non-Christian teen should read *You Asked* in order to hear a fair and accurate presentation of Christianity and The Gospel.

Intelligent but personal.

Cameron Cole, Director of Youth Ministries, Cathedral Church of the Advent, Chairman, Rooted: A Theology Conference for Student Ministry

Perhaps the highest praise I can give this volume is that I feel confident in giving it to my students. Many books for youth water things down and don't really deal with their tough questions. But not this one. I know that here they'll find clear and compelling answers to the questions they are asking in language they understand. I am delighted it's available and will be directing students to it for years to come.

Bijan Mirtolooi, Youth Ministry Staff, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City

Apologetics for Dummies? Absolutely not: apologetics for thoughtful, inquiring young teens! I wish I had known someone like Bill Edgar when I was 13 or 14. I wouldn't have had to start with other people's questions, including the Church's—but with my own. The modern pastor will find endless hints here on great ways to connect with youth of all ages. Bill talks to young people without a hint of talking down to them.

Peter C. Moore, D.D.

Minister of Discipleship, St. Michael's Church, Charleston, SC and founder of FOCUS, a ministry to high school students in independent schools. Peter is also the former Dean/President of Trinity School for Ministry, and the author of several books

Professor Bill Edgar is the ideal person to help teenagers think through the Christian faith. Harvard educated, and once school master extraordinaire, then Professor of Apologetics in Aix-en-Provence, for two decades now he has taught hundreds of appreciative students at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. And this is just the beginning! Widely read in, and sensitive to, contemporary culture (as his other books make clear), he is also a jazz pianist who has toured throughout Europe. And there is much more! But perhaps best of all, Bill Edgar is a listening and deeply respectful Christian whose presence brings others (and especially young people) immediately into the circle of his life-long friends. I suspect that *You Asked* will add to that circle every teenager who reads it!

Sinclair B Ferguson, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC.

YOU ASKED

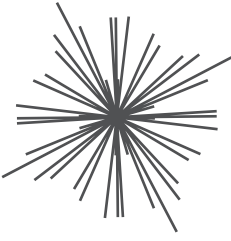
Questions and Answers
About God

William Edgar

CF4•K

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Who Am I?

For my own high school years I went to a boarding school. It was in New England, which is in the northeastern United States, but the place was modeled after the old fashioned British public schools. There were plenty of rules, some trivial, such as tying your necktie correctly, others serious, such as staying on the campus with only a few exceptions. If we were particularly disobedient, say, wandering off campus, for punishment we were sent to the dreaded “rock pile.” This consisted of moving rocks in a large pile from one place to another. If we had been extra bad, then we had to return the pile to its original place. And so on. Why was this such a hardship? For one thing, it was demeaning. All your friends could see you out there struggling with these rather large rocks. For another, it was an utterly meaningless exercise. It served no purpose whatsoever. It was hard work for no particular reason.

Human beings are not meant to work for no reason. Work may be hard, or it may be easy. But there has to be a reason to work in the first place. It may sound trite, but it is profoundly true: before engaging in work, or anything else, really, we have to figure out who we are. We have an identity issue. When we interviewed young people in view of writing these pages, that was a constant question we received: what’s my true identity? The only sufficient reason to go on living, let alone work or play or perform a thousand tasks as human beings, is to know who I am.

Why exactly are we special? There are lots of answers out there; two main ones are claiming our attention. One of the loudest says we are basically good, and when in doubt,



we simply need to feel good about ourselves. You may have heard this sort of talk. “You are awesome.” Or, “She has a great self-image, feels good about herself.” In sports commentary we regularly hear, “He has confidence,” or, “He looked deep into himself and found the resources he needed,” or something of the sort.

The other voice is the opposite. “You’re such a loser.” Or, more tactfully, “she struggles with a low self-image,” or, “right now, she’s not a happy camper.” When a young person is confused or angry we are told they have “anger issues,” and they need some tips in anger management, or the like. In our therapeutic culture, a culture based on feeling good or bad, we tell someone that they have been “insensitive” or “inappropriate,” rather than simply wrong.

The darkly cynical “Beavis and Butthead,” recently revived, or the tasteless “Unsupervised” on American television appear to address some of the hard questions young people must face, but they do so with such nihilism (death-like meaninglessness) that they leave no real alternative between “you are awesome” or “you’re a loser.”

Now, we don’t want to throw out the baby with the bath water. We certainly do not have to choose between feelings and morals, or between self-image and truth. Both are important. As God’s creatures, we are meant to enjoy both. But just trying to feel good about yourself without any reason is not very healthy. Indeed, self-confidence, while a good result sometimes of doing things right, is not usually a good cause. This is particularly true when you are trying to find the meaning of your life. For one thing there is lots not to be proud about. I ought really not to be self-confident about the darker side of my personality. I certainly ought not to feel good about it. Rather, a true diagnosis should indeed lead to a low self-image. My bad habits, my temper, my self-centeredness: these are not subjects for pride. But there is a better way.

Am I Special?

So, then, what is special about me or you? Here is another voice, told to us in the Bible. And it is one of the most revolutionary ideas that has ever made its way into the world.



Mankind is created in God's image, after his likeness
(Gen. 1:26-27).

That is an incredible statement. It is radical. You and I are like God. Just as children are “like” their parents, we resemble God in important ways. We can think his thoughts after him. We are capable of friendships, even of having families, all of which reflect something about God himself, who is a Father, and a Son, and who is the Spirit (more on the Trinity in a subsequent chapter). Even though we are creatures, made by someone else, we are like our Creator. Both our bodies and our souls are made after God’s image. We have eyes, because God sees, ears because he hears. We think because God is rational. We are persons, because God is a Person, with a capital P.

Why did God decide to make us with such a noble nature? He could have made robots. They would have been easier to handle! But he did not make us just for his own entertainment. He made us in order to love us. Here is another, related, incredibly revolutionary idea. God had so much love to give that he decided to make creatures fully capable of receiving that love and giving it back. He gave us an extraordinary purpose. We were made first and foremost to be loved by him and to love him back.

If you ever wonder what is the meaning of life, the simple answer is, to be loved by God, and to love him back. God loves us in thousands of ways. He provides for us. He gives us friends and interests. He sets us in the world he made, and directs us to rule over it. But the best of all is that he loves us simply because he loves us! Our friendship with him and his with us are unmovable absolutes, with no deeper explanation. Can this possibly be true? Think about it. Do you love your parents? They are a gift of God. Do you love your friends? A gift from God. Do you love



science and technology? A gift. Music? The arts? Gifts, all of them gifts. Well, all of those reflect the more fundamental love of God. To be sure, something has gone terribly wrong, so that God's love is not always evident. We'll get to that shortly. But the love of God is the very heart of the meaning of life.

God loves us, and we are meant to love him back. How do we do that? Well, there are many ways to love God: worshiping him, talking to him (in prayer), ordering our life to honor and please him. Have you ever seen the film, *Chariots of Fire*? It's the story of Eric Liddell, one of the greatest runners the world has ever seen. He won the 400 meter event in the 1924 Paris Summer Olympics, and set a record that took years to overcome. The Liddell family were Christians, committed to missions. But it happens that Eric's sister Jenny once questioned his priorities, wondering why he spent so much time on the track, and not in missions. He remarked to her, "Jenny, I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure."³ Whatever our gifts, be they large or small, they come from God. We should not rank our importance to God in terms of performance, or giftedness. We can be sure God loves us, not because of our gifts, but because he loves sinners like us. That he loves me personally I can know because, first, his Word says so (1 John 3:1), and second he has proved it to us by sending his only son to die and be raised up for me (Rom. 5:6-8). If we are so loved, then we ought certainly to use our gifts for his glory, but they are not the condition for his love. He loves us unconditionally.

The old hit song from the Beatles says it well, "Love Is All You Need." It is not certain that John Lennon fully understood what he was singing, especially since there was no mention of loving God in the song. He did recognize, though, that such a song was radical, and declared that his art was dedicated to changing the world, making it a better place. Taken at face value the statement is true. We can only approach loving God because he first loved us,

³ Note that this is taken from the film and not the official biography.

to be sure. But in this way, love is all we need. Unfortunately in our world today the reverse is often true: all you love is need.⁴ We cultivate our needs and we think we deserve everything good just because we are who we are. There is nothing wrong with need in itself. We need food, we need air, we need security, and indeed, we need God. But need is not an end in itself. God is! So who am I? A creature loved by God.



Things did go very wrong early in human history, and threatened this love, but we're not there quite yet. Before we can address what went wrong, we really have to know that love was the plan. There is a profound statement in the document known as the Westminster Shorter Catechism which many Christians know without necessarily being able to identify the source.

In answer to the question, "What is the chief end of man," the answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

The word "end" here, means "purpose." What an extraordinary statement! Our purpose in life is to honor God in all things, but also enjoy him. That does not mean simply to feel good in our relation to him. This particular word means to have our entire fulfillment in our relationship with God. The more we honor and obey him, the more joy we experience. Joy becomes a major reason for living. How different from "feeling good about myself."

Beginning Down the Right Path

The Christian religion actually reorients and corrects our deepest aspirations. We are meant for fellowship with God himself. We don't function properly when we don't have that. Of course, many people are not in touch with their deepest longings. Or they confuse them for something else and try to satisfy them with inadequate "gods." These include sex, or music, or money, or just about anything

⁴ This is the marvelous title by Tony Walter, *All You Love Is Need*, London: SPCK, 1985.



else. All of these objects are good in themselves, but hopelessly inadequate as substitutes for God.

The great Saint Augustine once said this prayer to God: "We are restless until we find our rest in thee."

We're longing for rest, that is, for true peace, whether we know it or not. One of my favorite thoughts from C.S.Lewis, the marvelous apologist of the previous century, is from a sermon, entitled *The Weight of Glory*. He says,

"...it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us... We are far too easily pleased."⁵

The best kind of apologetics commends this glorious offer. Going deeper, our identity leads to action. Who I am and what I do are deeply connected. More specifically, this loving God gave his human image-bearers, you and me, a task. So his love is purposeful. God made us for several purposes besides pure, Sunday morning worship. Here is what he told the human race at the very dawn of its existence:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth," (Gen. 1:28).

Subduing the earth may sound odd to us today, especially because many people subdue the earth violently, without caring for our planet's welfare. But rightly understood, it is a key concept. God made the world and all its inhabitants very beautiful, but there was still work to be done. Everything was not yet fully tamed. The world and its inhabitants were not fully developed, nor all of its potential fully realized. Forests were still wild, minerals undiscovered, buildings not yet built, melodies not yet written. So that is our task. We are to bring more and more beauty into this world. We've been at it for a long time, but still today things are nowhere near finished. It will take an eternity to finish the job, first here and then

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, MacMillan, 1949, 2.

in the world to come! How wonderful and rich is this calling. It's the very opposite of the boarding school "rock pile."



Do you worry about the implications of this order to subdue the earth and ecology? Rightly so. A close look at both expressions, "subdue" and "have dominion" shows nothing about the violation of the world that entails pollution. Rather, they are meant to imply a gentle, caring authority over the earth, not a violent one. There have been critics of biblical religion who think that this commandment given to our first ancestors somehow justifies achieving progress at any cost, even the pollution of the earth and selfishly robbing our planet of all its resources.⁶ Nothing of the kind is implied in the Genesis directive. We learn here, and throughout the Bible that God cares very much for the world he has made, and condemns any kind of disrespect for it. Psalm 104 tells us how he cares for the animals. And Jesus told his disciples that even the flowers of the field have a beauty that is greater than human beauty (Matt. 6:26-30). Although we may enjoy good meat, which obviously comes from slaughtered animals, that is never an excuse for animal abuse. If a donkey stumbles because his load is too heavy, we are not allowed just to stand by and look (Exod. 23:5). Even the trees were protected in ancient Israel (Deut. 20:19). Many young people today are rightly concerned for the environment, and are looking to make ecology their profession.

So then, who are we? We are humans, made after the image of God, and loved by our Creator. God truly loves us! So what are we to do in response?

- First, love God back; thank, worship and adore him. John Calvin tells us in the beginning of his marvelous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that to know yourself you need to know God, but to know God you need to know yourself.⁷ It's both-and!

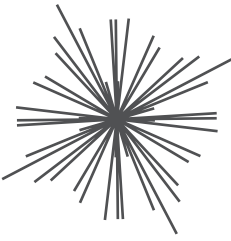
⁶ For example, Lynn White, Jr., "The historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155: 1203-1207.

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1.1-1.1.2.

- Second, we are meant to go out into every continent by ground, sea or air, and explore the world, using our gifts and skills in meaningful work. It is the very opposite of the “rock pile.” We are meant to respect creation, while yet lovingly to subdue it. Every legitimate job is meant to be engaged in, and our life should be dedicated to loving God and to making this world a better place for all of his creatures. What a grand purpose! My identity is high and noble indeed.

Discussion

1. Why is tedious work so demeaning?
2. What does it mean to be loved by God?
3. In what way are human tasks meaningful?
4. Is the Christian faith really unique, or do all faiths deal with these questions?



What Went Wrong?

Now we come to the down side. What is clear to every young person I have ever interviewed, is that something is terribly, terribly wrong. Things are not the way they are supposed to be. Children die of leukemia. Husbands abuse their wives. Bank officers cheat their investors. Animals suffer needlessly. Nations go to war. Terrorists hold hostages. The list is long and depressing.

No doubt the issue that most often comes up with young people, or, for that matter, with people of any age, is whether we can believe in a God who is good and powerful, in the face of such horrors. We know this as “the problem of evil.”

Because just about everyone recognizes this problem in one way or another, it is important to look at some of the typical answers they give. From the family of Asian philosophies, including Hinduism and Buddhism, comes the response, evil is an illusion. Suffering, pain, death, are basically not real. One of the emphases in Buddhism is detachment. If only we can become free from the illusion of feelings and personality, we can get free from evil, which is a figment of our imagination anyway. But such an answer is hopeless. Ask any mother who has lost her child whether death is an illusion. Ask anyone who has fled for life before a conqueror whether oppression is unreal. It just won't do.

Another answer we often hear is the brave-sounding “get on with it.” The Stoic philosophers had a sophisticated form of this answer. Just rise above it, and endure the pain, trying to help our fellow human sufferers along the way. We need to be self-sufficient, calm, never perturbed



by poverty or pain. The more popular form of this view is the teacher who says, “stop whining, pull yourself together.” Of course, there are times when a stiff upper lip is appropriate. But most of the time, such an attitude makes us insensitive to the plight of destitute people. Furthermore, it does not have the power needed to endure pain and suffering.

Still another answer is called the “silver lining.” God has allowed evil because only when we see how bad things are can we see the good in them. Examples of this view abound. When I visit people on their sickbeds, I often ask them something like this: I know how greatly you are suffering; but do you see any good in it at all? Most people will say they do. One will say it gives her a new appreciation for things that really matter, such as the family. Another will say it helps him see how self-reliance will not work, and how he must begin to trust other people more. The Bible actually supports this view.

Paul tells his readers that our suffering produces endurance, and endurance character, and character produces a hope that will not fade (Rom. 5:3-5).

One of the most enduring stories in the Bible is the account of Joseph, sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. By a series of divinely ordained circumstances he became Prime Minister of Egypt during the years of feast and famine. When the harvest was good he ordered all the extra grain to be stored up. Then, when a dreadful famine came, Egypt had all it needed. Among the beneficiaries were the Jews, who came for help to Joseph, not knowing at first who he was. When Joseph finally confronted his brothers with his true identity he made this famous declaration:

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen. 50:20).

Jesus himself suffered in order that we may be saved. The “silver lining” view is undeniable in cases such as these. Still, it is not a good overall answer for why evil? Where was the silver lining in the holocaust? Most serious of all,

does God need to stoop to evil in order to bring about good? Put this way, the idea is repugnant.



A Very Different Answer

There are many other answers to the problem of why things are not as they are meant to be, and how a good and powerful God could allow evil. The biblical answer is quite astonishing. It is even shocking. Simply stated, it is that human beings, not God, are at fault. Yet God is fully able to bring us out of our abnormal state. Are we really so guilty?

The concept of sin is not an easy one to explain. Sin? This old-fashioned word is so prone to misunderstanding that even Christians hesitate to use it. Comedians talk of sin as though it were an embarrassing mistake which everyone commits, and which the church takes too seriously. One popular song denounces the false testimony of a man who tells a woman he loves her when he really doesn't. "It's a sin to tell a lie," the song declares with a wink of the eye. In America we call Las Vegas "Sin City," because there are salacious stage shows and alluring gambling devices. But the biblical notion of sin is altogether deeper and far more serious. Sin is one of the main biblical words for human-approved wrongdoing.

This old-fashioned word means opposing God, refusing to submit to him, leaving undone things we ought to have done. Human beings live in a sinful condition. Even more difficult to explain is what we sometimes call original sin. That is, the fact that our first parents brought sin into the world and it infected all of their posterity. In his excellent book, *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton asserts,

"Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved."⁸

What he meant is that modern people do not like to speak of original sin. And yet, while many doctrines are a bit removed, or abstract, the doctrine of sin, the presence of

⁸G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Ignatius Press, 1995, chapter 2.



evil in each human being, while it may not be very palatable, can be verified empirically. Parents do not have to teach their children to sin. They somehow just know! Sin is everywhere, and we do not have to look very far to find it.

The great English poet W. H. Auden was an easy-going humanist. He was pretty sure every person was good, deep down. He thought, just give him space, and a man's natural goodness will shine through. He moved to the United States in 1939 and took up residence in New York. To be precise he moved to Yorkville, which was, and still is, a thoroughly German neighborhood of Manhattan. One evening, with a friend, he went to the cinema. They watched a rather gruesome report on Hitler's invasion of Warsaw, entitled *Sieg im Poland* ("War in Poland"). What startled Auden most was the cries, "kill them," "kill the Poles," coming from the mostly German audience. As he reflected later, this was the denial of every humanistic value. These were human beings crying out for blood. He could no longer believe everyone was basically good. But then another question arose. By what right could he call these outbursts evil? How could he call Hitler's invasion of Poland wrong? As he put it, "There had to be some reason why Hitler was wrong." And he found it, in God. Human beings are evil, because God says so.⁹ That is, the heart of evil is to be against God, who is good. Otherwise, the line between good and evil would just be arbitrary. And we know that is not so.

The fact that we are evil may lead to great discouragement. In one way, it should. Why are some kids bullies? Why do we seek vengeance upon our offenders? Why do I find a thousand ways to put myself first? This common experience is profoundly discouraging. But, still, there is hope. When you have a clear, honest diagnosis, you are ready to face the facts and maybe do something about it.

According to the Bible, we were not always in this condition. The world into which our first ancestors entered

⁹ From "The Fatal Flaw of Liberalism," in *The Journey: Our Quest for Faith and Meaning*, Os Guinness, editor, NavPress, 2001, 75-77.

was a paradise. They were to lead their descendents into a life of happiness and maturity. God had only asked one thing of them, a test they had to pass, not to eat of the fruit of a tree, called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Not that God wanted them to be naïve about things that mattered, least of all things like good and evil. He wanted them to know the difference between good and evil by a process we might call maturation, not by disobedience. Not, in other words, by actually engaging in evil.



How would we have become full-grown? Very much the way we do in ordinary life today: by being confronted with real choices and making the right decision. When we are told to come home at a certain time, or to be kind to a younger brother or sister, we have a choice. When we make the right choice, we learn things like patience, courage, and we develop character. Unfortunately Adam and Eve, our first parents, did not make the right decision. Rather than listening to God they decided, at the suggestion of a talking serpent, of all things, to take from the forbidden fruit. The serpent argued that God was keeping the fruit from them because he was worried that humans might end up knowing good and evil the way God did. Well, they fell for it, and instead of making them wise, it made them foolish. Not that they acquired no knowledge of good and evil. They did. But the wrong way; by succumbing to it rather than resisting it.

It Gets Worse Before it Gets Better

That is how everything went wrong. Each successive generation continued in this pattern, and even made things worse. Murders, hatred, abuse, corruption, and every other kind of evil permeated humanity. Should we blame Adam for all this? That would make sense if only we were ourselves quite innocent. However, that is the opposite of the truth. Should we blame God? No. The Christian view affirms with great conviction that God hates evil more than anyone.

“You who are of purer eyes than to see evil, and cannot look at wrong,” the prophet Habakkuk tells us (1:13).



Indeed, God is angry at evildoers and will one day bring terrible judgment upon them.

“I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity,” (Isaiah 13:11)

Far from authoring evil, God cannot tempt anyone as he is above evil (James 1:13). Is God powerful? Yes. Is the presence of evil a surprise to him? No. Does his power have anything at all to do with the presence of evil? It must, but we don't know quite how, since he is not responsible for it. So, we are left with three great certainties: God is good, God is all-powerful, human beings are responsible for sin in the world. Until we are convinced of all three, we cannot make much headway in resolving the problem of evil.

So, are we as bad as we could possibly be? No, of course not. That is, we are not demons. There is an old Reformed doctrine known as “total depravity,” which does not mean we are utterly and absolutely depraved. We are still made after God's image. We are still capable of good thoughts, words and deeds. So how do these two operate together?

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian historian who played a key role in defeating communism, explains that every human being has two characteristics operating in them at the same time. He was interned in a prison camp for having criticized Joseph Stalin. He found himself in the infamous Gulag, an oppressive series of hard-labor sites. There he saw, first hand, both great acts of bravery, and also enormous crimes perpetrated on the prisoners. He found that prison afforded him the time to reflect for prolonged hours on his condition. Solzhenitsyn came slowly to recognize that without his severe trials he could not have taken the journey that led him to become such an effective prophet for his times.

One incident that occurred marked him for life. His friend Dr. Boris Kornfeld, a Jewish convert to Christianity, tried to teach him that we do not deserve to be spared, since we are all capable of transgression. One night Solzhenitsyn's dear friend had been brutally murdered by the guards, for

no good reason. As he reflected on this senseless act, it began to dawn on him that while there was no connection between this murder and a particular evil deed done by the doctor, yet his words rang true: no one deserves to be spared. And then, rather movingly, he describes how it began to be clear to him that he, Solzhenitsyn, was capable of great cruelty. At the same time he began to feel the first real stirrings of good in him.



He concluded: "Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts."¹⁰

So then, in answer to the question we raised in the previous chapter, who am I?, the reply is that there is a twofold reality to each of us. I am God's beloved image-bearer, as we saw, but at the same time I am also inclined toward evil. How can both be true? The book of Genesis tells us how it all began. But the rest of the Bible also tells us to look carefully and honestly at ourselves. This double identity is a verifiable fact. We know deep down that we have high moral standards, we love our friends, we enjoy certain tasks. We also know deep down that we want things we should not have and if we could get away with it we would try many forbidden things. Ask yourself this: if I could be sure no one was watching, would I ... fill in the blank? If we are honest, we might admit we would do more than we ought. Maybe a lot more. We are capable of the worst. The Bible calls this sin.

So, then, we are more noble and more wonderfully made than we can imagine. And we are more sinful and prone to evil than we can imagine. And that is a tremendous beginning to the answer for the problem of evil, because in the diagnosis is a hope for the cure.

¹⁰ From Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978, IV/1.

Discussion

1. Give your own examples of things “not as they are meant to be.”
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the view that evil is an illusion?
3. Or, of the “get on with it” view?
4. Or the “silver lining” view?
5. Is the biblical answer really believable? Do you agree with its diagnosis?



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